

News Release

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State Endangered Species Conservation Efforts Receive \$37.2 Million Boost Through Service Grants

Washington and Idaho awarded more than \$7 million to assist in collaborative efforts to conserve America's most imperiled species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is awarding \$37.2 million in grants to 20 states to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered species across the nation. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF), will benefit numerous species, ranging from the northern spotted owl to the greater-sage grouse. For a complete list of the 2015 grant awards, see www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/index.html.

Washington will receive \$6.7 million for five projects, and Idaho will receive \$454,475 for one project. These projects restore vital habitats essential for protecting and conserving at-risk species.

“Private landowners and natural resource managers play a vital role in conserving our nation’s most imperiled wildlife,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “By cultivating partnerships between federal, state and local governments, private organizations and individuals, we can establish creative and effective solutions to some of the greatest conservation challenges of our time. These grants are one of many tools available under the Endangered Species Act, and we look forward to providing continued guidance and support for these programs.”

Authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), these competitive grants enable states to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other government agencies to initiate conservation planning efforts and acquire or protect habitat for the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

In Washington, the grants are:

- \$2 million for the I-90 Wildlife Corridor Phase VI in Kittitas County. This grant will lead to the acquisition and permanent protection of 1,014 acres of habitat for four federally listed species: bull trout, northern spotted owl, Canada lynx and gray wolf.

- \$2 million for the Mt. Si Area Old Growth Project in King County. This grant will lead to the acquisition of 1,415 acres of habitat for the marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, gray wolf and 11 unlisted species covered by the Washington State Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), including the Pacific fisher and wolverine. The acquired habitat will be protected and managed by Washington Department of Natural Resources and Forterra Northwest.
- \$132,000 for the City of Tumwater, in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, to develop an HCP to cover activities that will affect listed species and their habitats. The prairies of south Puget Sound are among the rarest habitats in the United States. Development, agriculture and fire suppression have resulted in a dramatic decline of this habitat, and less than 10 percent of historic prairies remain, most of which are low quality.
- \$596,958 for the Grand Coulee Ranch project in Douglas County. This project is part of an ongoing Washington Department of Fish Wildlife effort to conserve more than 21,000 acres of critical shrub-steppe habitat along Rufus Woods Reservoir to provide long-term conservation for a suite of shrub-steppe obligate species. The two target properties total 4,279 acres and are part of a signed option to purchase the entire Grand Coulee Ranch, which will protect one of the last remaining large blocks of habitat for the Columbian Basin pygmy rabbit, Greater sage grouse, Washington ground squirrel and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse.
- \$2 million for the West Rocky Prairie 2015 acquisition in Thurston County, which will protect 745 acres, one of the largest available tracts of mima-mounded prairie-oak wetland habitat in western Washington. Acquisition of this site also would protect the headwaters of salmon-bearing Allen and Beaver creeks, and would add a vital section to the 3,615-acre conservation network between Millersylvania State Park, McIntosh Tree Farm, Rocky Prairie Natural Area Preserve, and the West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area.

In Idaho, the grant is:

- \$454,475 for the Spalding's Catchfly Conservation Project, Phase II in Latah County. The second phase of this ongoing project will acquire properties that provide a critical link between existing conservation areas and protect some of the last Palouse Prairie remnants. The protection of these properties, totaling 333 acres, will contribute to the recovery of Spalding's catchfly, along with eight species of greatest conservation need, five rare endemic plants, and a critically endangered ecosystem.

The grants are funded in part by the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was established by Congress in 1964. The fund promotes access to outdoor recreation resources for present and future generations, and provides money to federal, state and local governments to purchase land, water and wetlands for the benefit of all Americans. For the past 50 years, the fund has supported more than 40,000 conservation and outdoor recreation projects nationwide. Without action from

Congress, authorization for the program will expire in September. President Obama has proposed to fully and permanently fund the program.

“These grants enable the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to tap into the considerable capacity of the state fish and wildlife agencies and their partners to advance the stewardship of our nation's fish and wildlife resources,” said Larry Voyles, President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Director of the Arizona Game and Fish Department. “The states’ proactive, science-based conservation programs and partnerships to restore vital habitats are more effective and less costly to American taxpayers than an emergency room approach to save species in peril.”

CESCF grant funding is provided through three programs that advance creative partnerships for the recovery of imperiled species: the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program, and Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program.

The Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program provides grants to states and territories to support the development of Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) through funding of baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach and similar planning activities. HCPs are agreements between the Service and private landowners, states or counties that allow certain activities to take place that may impact one or more ESA-listed species. In return, landowners agree to conservation measures designed to avoid, minimize and mitigate the impact of those actions.

Under the HCP Land Acquisition Grants Program, the Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisitions that complement the conservation objectives of approved HCPs.

The Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program provides funds to states and territories to acquire habitat for endangered and threatened species with approved recovery plans. Habitat acquisition to secure long-term protection often is an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America’s native fish, wildlife and plants. The Service is working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Ecological Services Program, visit www.fws.gov/endangered.